



U.S. Department of Justice

JEFFREY A. TAYLOR
United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia

Judiciary Center
555 Fourth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, June 4, 2007

For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

Channing Phillips (202) 514-6933

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/dc>

Naval Chief Petty Officer Pleads Guilty to Transportation of Visual Depictions of Minors Engaging in Sexually Explicit Conduct

Washington D.C. – A 37-year-old Navy Chief Petty Officer (“CPO”), Jeffrey A. Maisenhelder, pled guilty today in the U. S. District Court for the District of Columbia before the Honorable Colleen Kollar-Kotelly to Transportation of Visual Depictions of Minors Engaging in Sexually Explicit Conduct, United States Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor announced. Sentencing is scheduled for September 21, 2007, when the defendant will face a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison.

Prior to the defendant’s arrest on February 5, 2007, CPO Maisenhelder, was stationed at the Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia, where he was assigned to the USS Stout (DDG-55) as a gas turbine systems technician. Maisenhelder, a native of St. Louis, Missouri, had been with the Navy for almost 20 years.

On November 1, 2006, while on the internet on his computer at his home in Chesapeake, Virginia, Maisenhelder, using the screen name, “Pastor,” began to communicate with another person in the “Incest Taboo” chatroom who went by the screen name of “James.” Believing “James” to be a pedophile, the defendant told him that he was “active” -- that is, that he was engaged in sex with children and that he had access to them. James, in fact, was not a pedophile, rather he was a detective with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)’s Regional Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, acting in an undercover capacity online in search of individuals who possessed, distributed, produced, or received images of children depicted in pornographic materials.

The chats between the defendant and the defendant continued for several months, during which time, the defendant would discuss his sexual interactions with young children and his access to children between the ages of five and fifteen because of his standing as a “trusted person” in the community who “had his ways” of preventing children from disclosing his sexual activity with them. When the detective told him of his access to a 10-year-old girl, who was the daughter of a prostitute, the defendant expressed an interest in meeting the 10-year-old and described the sex acts he wanted to perform on the child. Furthermore, when the detective told the defendant that he wanted a five- to seven-year-old for himself, the defendant stated that “he

was up for that as well.” During the chats, the defendant sent the detective photographs of a nine-year-old girl and a girl who appeared to be three years old with whom the defendant stated that he was having sex.

On February 5, 2007, while chatting online with the detective, the defendant sent him seven still images and three videos in which minor children, including an 18-month-old, were depicted engaging in sex acts and posing in a suggestive manner so as to expose their genitalia. The majority of those images depicted prepubescent females. At one point in the on-line conversation, the defendant asked the detective whether he wanted a picture to masturbate to and forwarded to the detective several images that depicted infants and a young girl approximately five years old engaging in sex acts with a male.

On February 8, 2007, detectives from MPD and Agents from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, accompanied by officers from the Chesapeake Police Department, went to the defendant’s home in Chesapeake, Virginia, to execute a search warrant issued by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. Among the items recovered were numerous data storage devices, including a computer, compact discs and digital memory sticks containing images. A forensic analysis of the evidence has identified over 2,000 images that would constitute child pornography under federal law.

At today’s plea hearing, the defendant admitted that he possessed the child pornographic images recovered from his computer and storage devices and that he sent some of those images to the detective. However, notwithstanding his discussions during his online chats with the detective to the contrary, the defendant denied that he was also engaging in sex with minors. Authorities in Virginia have tried to locate the two children, ages nine and three, pictured in the photographs sent to the detective with whom the defendant stated he was having sex. They have been unable to locate either child. However, the plea offer specifically reserves the right of the prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia to prosecute the defendant for production of child pornography, child abuse or any criminal offense other than distribution, receipt or possession of child pornography based upon the evidence seized during the search of defendant’s home.

This case is being brought as part of Project Safe Childhood and the Regional Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorney’s Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov/.

In announcing today’s guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor praised the efforts of the Task Force and particularly those of MPD Detectives Timothy Palchak, Miguel Miranda and Jonathan Andrews, and Investigator George Taylor of the Naval Investigative Service who investigated the case and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Debra Long-Doyle and Angela Hart-Edwards who are prosecuting it.

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